



CULTURAL REVOLUTION: CHANGE IN TRIBAL SOCIETY

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Culture is the advanced development of human powers which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The culture of any people is a synthesis of the aspects of their social, education, religions, artistic, economic and other activities and is a product of the struggle of mankind against the natural as well as man-made forces of modern day. The very entity of the word religion is supernatural and suprasensory whereas the culture has the material aspect too.

Religion is the expression of manner and mode of adjustment affected by people with their conceptions of the supernatural. The most widespread manifestation of this attitude is in the shape of beliefs and rituals which form the basis of all religions – whether primitive or modern. Theodore Dreiser had beautifully described religion as “a bondage that man has invented to protect a soul made bloody by circumstances”. This definition holds good when we talk tribal faith as animism, primitivism, naturism, bongaism and so on. Primitive religions can be differentiated from the higher ones by the relative absence of philosophical speculations in the former. The general attitude of European writers towards the tribal religion is that the tribes did not have religions at all, or that it was a mixture of all the varied idolatries and superstitious. Durkheim was the first scholar who believed to treat all beliefs on one level and Hutton advocated the replacement of the term animism by tribal religions.

Religion had been regarded as a product of civilization until Tylor and Frazer gave convincing proof that primitive societies have their own versions of religious activity, not very different from that of civilized societies. Ever since Tylor's view were published no ethnographer has reported any primitive society without religious beliefs and practices.

“Every religion has the adjustment in local setting. What the cruder animism does for a primitive tribe, the philosophical Hinduism and human Christianity cannot do because the former represents the local attempt at solving problems of local character while the latter have been evolved in different settings and in response to different needs”. Tribal culture or primitive culture are the terms which often creates an impression of inferiority in the minds of those who tend to take a bird's view of the things. It is a mistake to assume that the primitive elements surviving from the very early times have nothing to contribute to modern age. In fact, these primitive elements highlight and give importance to one important aspect that is often found missing in most of the so called “advanced societies” – the welfare, not of the individual but of the community as a whole. Against Hindus and Christians who visit to their temples or churches for seeking individual welfare whereas there is not a single religions ritual in tribal society without the participation of whole community. This social characterization of all tribal activities, may it be dance or amusement, distinguish it from the so called advanced or superior religions of the world. Tribal religion is a part of their everyday life, not confined to individual faith or creed. It has simple social ethical codes distilled all through the ages.

The great danger to tribal world is that the lack of the emergence of a large sized middle class in their society. New wave of development urban influences and free flow of easy money have distinctively divided tribal corporate life between microscopic rich class or elite groups preponderance over mass level poor class segment. Such tribal elites are serving the vested interest of capitalists and perpetuating the exploitation of their own tribal community. That is why even after channelising the millions of rupees for the tribal development. The same is being drained out to the plains all the times unlike the seasonal drainage of rainwater to the plains. In this context, the constitutional protection of the tribals have protected their economic backwardness. Non-cherishment of the economic equality for longer time can outburst the tribals patience and peace both, which have been preserved all through the ages and can foster the sense of alienation and strife.

The tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh are passing through a critical stage of transition. Reaction of each tribe or group of tribes has not been same due to non uniformity in their economic and educational development. It will have to be realized that ‘economic disparity’ or ‘wide-gap’ or ‘uneven growth’ or ‘developmental lay between community to community and area to area’ may provoke

adverse reactions causing social upheaval, political turmoil and economic depression and in toto, leading to a valueless culture, deculturation or cultural disintegration. We all know cultural breakdown makes people either spineless or anarchic”.

The pursuance of the Elwinian approach towards tribals as “Museum specimen” till sixties has weakened the resilience of tribal theology, metaphysics and culture. While retarding the pace of development for centuries the tribes of Arunachal were devoid of a common lingua franca and frequent contact among themselves due to hard topography. Hardly two decades have elapsed when we could develop Hindi and English as link languages. The interaction and exposure both within tribal and outside world has only started with the development of roads, transport facilities and electronic media especially TV and Telephones.

But still the tribal religion and culture represents a “myriad of marginal religion” or “No man's land” paving the path of polystrization which has not slowed down. It poses a new challenge to our process of assimilation of religious culture wherein polystrization is breeding a new creed, rupturing the centuries old tribal indigenous religion and culture as well. Tribals think that being a Hindu or Christian meant being something superior whereas as tribal in tribal faith they stand already superior human beings pure and noble.

The social political effect on converts is to diminish his enthusiasm for tribal ethos and its culture, the social effect is to isolate him from his non-convert brethren in the villages resulting in disputes and refusal to observe the traditional rituals, taboos and ceremonies at which the others, believing that this brings bad luck to the village are naturally resentful.

The pathology created by converts is to be sorted out in one hand that to reconvert the converts to their original fold and rejuvenate their tribal self pride in own faith and ancestors, secondly to intimate the process of assimilation of the converted families into our indigenous bend of faith in order to avoid our own converted brethren to be treated as strangers in own community. But in both the cases the tribals must disallow anymore religious conversion and fast changes in cultural adaptations and adaptations. In between Indian and Western ethos, the tribals have to guard some-where their Aruanachalee identity else we will perish or vanish. Here it is not a call to all converts for return to tribal religion rather the bonafide tribal should endeavour for its resilience instead of forsaking it. Tribal fold should not distrust and ridicule their tribal faith else the socio-cultural norms will get upset.

But our spiritual development should be on their own genius of the tribals themselves, without giving an exhibition of the bankruptcy of their supernatural belief else we will really need to import religion alongwith high technology. A stage has come when the tribals should remain vigilant and caution towards such initiatives or overtures shown to them by outsiders on the name of missionaries, NGOs and the government which have some inherent ulterior and hidden religious motto.

But without being defeatist about tribal religious, It is worthy to be preserved, as it has the potential of “Moral-rearmament”.

Tribal art, songs, dance, dress, music, craft should not become imitative as it will lose its value. At the same time changes are to be incorporated and technique should be improved while retaining its original shape in order to keep it dynamic and creative. Impact of TV and Cinema has not always been inspiring and it has adversely affected tribal corporate social life. On the other hand we shall have to learn to live with the ceaseless impact of electronic media and its covert invisible and imperceptible oscillating cultural invasion. We all know that we can't afford too many changes at a time but sometime we are compelled to go for certain adaptations which are not of our choice. We have to develop our own defence mechanism that too at our initiative if we are genuinely sincere for the protection of our tribal culture, identity, self-image and self pride. We should modernize and reforms by ourselves on lines of our own genius rooted into the soil of the land of Arunachal Pradesh.

Youths without being bewildered by the astonishing samples of civilization should take the own tribal society on right path. It is the educated tribals who first enter into the contact with the outside religious and cultures of the world. They are instrumental in bringing cultural change while shedding those traditions which have fallen to disuse. Every endeavours should be done by them to preserve our tribal cultural heritage intact, pure as we as relevant in the spate of modernity.

The opportune time has come for the tribal educationists, youth administrators, social workers and the elites of various circles to come forward to engineer a long awaited socio-cultural reform movement to usher an era of renaissance to save our tribal aboriginals from becoming foreigner to their own culture. The commonalities need to be probed and properly understood. A systematic comparative study of the indigenous faiths and practices still await our attention. The task need not be considered as a mere academic exercise and of academic value only. Magic religious ideas, beliefs and practices of each tribals community have been evolved over a long period of time in response to adaptive needs and strategies for survival in different ecological niches.

It is incumbent upon administrators, policy makers, academicians to see "tribals" must revive creativeness in those who have lost their arts, stimulate the old joy and zest in living, restore self respect and a pride in their own religion and culture among those who have been infected by a feeling of inferiority and above all give them a sense of freedom through a vision of what they can contribute to be great country which they have come to love and hope that they will soon plan their full part in administering themselves. In Arunachal Pradesh the cultural problems may be tribals emotional integration among themselves and with the rest part of India simultaneously while retaining their indigenous culture and original identity.

It is evident from our past experience that unless tribals themselves do not learn to defend themselves from their cultural-religion erosion no law or constitutional provision can protect our aboriginal nature of culture". The nature of the cultural problems of tribal people are of cultural crisis. The cord of fission between indianisation and modernization has to be set to create harmony through own efforts from within, without the interference from outside.

REFERENCES

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